



## **Cooperative Education Report**

**Practical Insights into ESG Research and Stakeholder Engagement at Sustainability Solutions Nepal**

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**Title:** Practical Insights into ESG Research and Stakeholder Engagement at Sustainability Solutions Nepal

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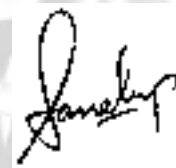
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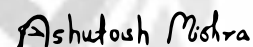
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### **Abstract**

This report on cooperative education entitled “Practical Insights into ESG Research and Stakeholder Engagement at Sustainability Solutions Nepal” summarizes the internship experience and is prepared based on the requirements of the eighth semester course of the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program at Kathmandu College of Management (KCM) affiliated with Siam University. It highlights that through this experience, I gained practical work experience in a consulting firm operating in the field of sustainability.

In this report, my roles of research and communication intern are mentioned where I worked directly under the supervision of the consulting team. The role involved helping in conducting market research and stakeholder engagement as well as promoting sustainability awareness. I did conduct six primary stakeholder interviews in six different sectors; namely banking sector, hospitality industry, environment organization, tourism sector, global sustainability platforms, and renewable energy industry. In addition, I have taken part in the Earth Hour event organized by WWF Nepal and also helped in preparing questionnaires for interview.

**Keywords:** ESG, Sustainability Consulting, Market Research, Stakeholder Engagement, Nepal, Renewable Energy, UN Global Compact

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## List of Abbreviation

Co-op = Cooperative Education

EIA = Environmental Impact Assessment

eSewa = A fin-tech company in Nepal (assessed during internship)

ESG = Environmental, Social, and Governance

IEE = Initial Environmental Examination

INGO = International Non-Governmental Organization

SSN = Sustainability Solutions Nepal

WWF = World Wildlife Fund



## Chapter 1: Introduction

Sustainability Solutions Nepal is an organization that acts as an adviser to consultancies regarding sustainability matters. Based in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sustainability Solutions Nepal is committed to promoting good business conduct by working with institutions and businesses in implementing ESG practices. Sustainability Solutions Nepal provides various services, including sustainable development consultancy, policy development, sustainability research, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and ESG assessment services to clients including businesses, development institutions, and corporations. The aim of SSN is to support sustainability through the promotion of environmental, social, and corporate governance among businesses and other entities.



Fig 1: Sustainability Solutions Nepal Logo

### 1.1 Company Profile

Sustainability Solutions Nepal (SSN) is a sustainability consulting organization that supports businesses and institutions in integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into their operations and decision-making processes. The organization works with corporations, development agencies, and institutions to strengthen sustainability practices and building organizational capacity for responsible business operations.

SSN provides services such as ESG strategy development, ESG system design and implementation, environmental and social due diligence, sustainability consulting across business functions, and ESG capacity building training program.

### 1.2 Company Vision & Mission

The following outlines the vision and mission of Sustainability Solutions Nepal in promoting sustainable and responsible business practices.

Vision: Unlock opportunities for a sustainable world.

Mission: Driving transformative action now for a sustainable tomorrow.

### **1.3 Core Values of the Company**

The company operates based on a set of core values that guide its sustainability-focused initiatives, professional conduct, and organizational culture.

- Excellence in us, excellence for you
- Transparent and open relationships with stakeholders
- Human in thoughts and actions
- Opportunities are limitless and to be unlocked
- Sustainability is business as usual

### **1.4 Objectives of the Cooperatives Study**

The following objectives were established to guide the learning experience and professional development during the co-operative study period.

Academic Objectives:

- To understand the concept and practical implementation of ESG organizations
- To gain exposure to sustainability consulting practices
- To analyze how businesses and institutions in Nepal approach sustainability

Professional Objectives:

- To develop research and analytical skills
- To improve professional communication and stakeholder engagement abilities
- To gain experience in preparing sustainability related communication materials
- To analyze the market gaps and where can SSN fit in

### **1.5 Organizational Structure**

In Sustainability Solutions Nepal, a functional collaboration approach is used in their organizational structure, whereby each of the members has their own set of skills in sustainability, ESG, climate action, Indigenous People's rights, and sustainable business development. This is an organization led by the ESG Director and Founder, responsible for strategic management and other general activities within the organization. There are different specialists and associates who work collaboratively on various projects in sustainability advisory, research, capacity building, and others.

### 1.5.1 Diagram of the Organizational Structure

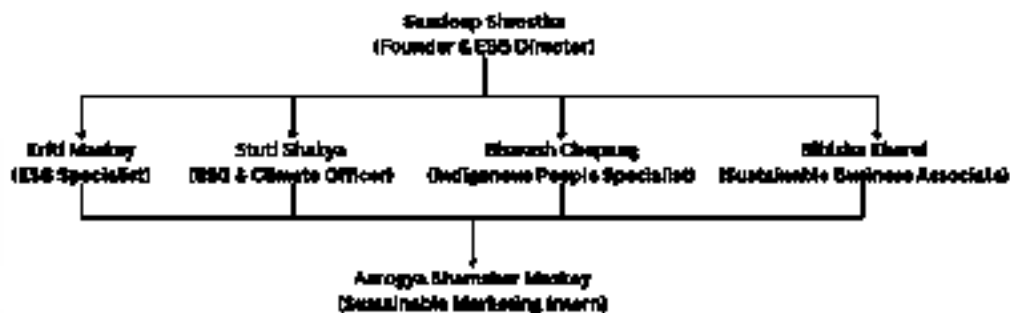


Fig 2: Organizational Structure of SSN

### 1.5.2 My Job Position

As part of my internship experience, I held the position of Sustainable Marketing Intern at Sustainability Solutions Nepal. Among the major tasks that were expected from me in my position was the provision of support in sustainability communication, market research, creation of content, preparing ESG-related documents, and branding efforts. It is noteworthy that I had to contribute to creating materials related to sustainability issues, researching trends in the field of ESG, and developing sustainable business practices as well as taking part in projects intended to enhance organizational visibility and impact.

### 1.5.3 My Job Position in the Company's Organizational Structure

The Sustainable Marketing Internship was conducted under the direction of the sustainability and ESG team of the company. I contributed significantly to processes that involved sustainability communications, research, marketing, and positioning while working with other specialists of the company. The internship gave me the opportunity to work across disciplines on issues related to sustainability while being actively involved in initiatives associated with ESG, climate change, inclusivity of Indigenous Peoples, and sustainable development.

### 1.6 My Intention & Motivation Choose This Company as My Co-op Studies Workplace

The main reason why I selected Sustainability Solutions Nepal as my place of study during my cooperative studies is that I have a great passion for sustainability, ESG activities, and responsible business growth. Given that I am a marketing student who has a keen interest in

sustainable businesses and the impacts they have on society, this company presented me with an incredible chance to obtain firsthand knowledge about an area of increasing relevance in today's business world. Moreover, the company's focus on sustainability consultation, ESG incorporation, climate change, and ethical business practices appealed to my academic and professional goals.

### 1.7 Strategic Analysis of the Company

**Table 1:** SWOT Analysis of Sustainability Solutions Nepal

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialized expertise in ESG and sustainability consulting</li> <li>• Strong focus on emerging sustainability issues</li> <li>• Diverse expertise within the team</li> <li>• Growing relevance of ESG services in Nepal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively small organizational size</li> <li>• Limited market awareness compared to larger consulting firms</li> <li>• Limited resources and workforce capacity</li> <li>• Dependence on project-based engagements</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing global and local demand for ESG integration</li> <li>• Growing awareness of sustainable business practices</li> <li>• Potential partnerships with INGOs, private sector, and investors</li> <li>• Expansion of sustainability training and advisory services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising competition in sustainability consulting</li> <li>• Changing regulatory and compliance environments</li> <li>• Economic instability affecting organizational investments</li> <li>• Limited understanding of ESG among some businesses</li> </ul>

The following strategic analysis highlights the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with Sustainability Solutions Nepal and its operating environment.

**Strengths:** With its unique skill set in ESG, climate change, sustainability and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, Sustainability Solutions Nepal can offer interdisciplinary sustainability solutions. Its expertise in responsible businesses and sustainable development will give the organization a competitive edge in the burgeoning sustainability sector of Nepal.

**Weakness:** Being a small company, SSN might have problems with workforce capacity, finance and implementing large projects. It must be mentioned that sustainability consulting is still at an early stage of development in Nepal, making it difficult to attract new clients.

**Opportunities:** There are many opportunities for SSN, especially considering the increased attention paid to issues such as ESG compliance, climate change, sustainable finance and responsible business conduct around the world. In addition, development organizations, investors and businesses are increasingly interested in sustainability consulting services.

**Threats:** Increased competition in the sustainability and ESG consulting sectors, economic instability, regulatory changes and lack of awareness of ESG issues on behalf of some organizations pose a threat to SSN.

### 1.8 Objectives of this Cooperative Studies

The purpose of this cooperative study is to do the following:

- Apply the theory-based knowledge concerning marketing, sustainability, and business management in a practical setting.
- Receive experience in terms of ESG, sustainability consulting, and responsible business.
- Gain the knowledge of how to conduct research, communicate effectively, and engage in sustainability marketing.
- Get familiar with the strategies that organizations use to be sustainable, engage stakeholders, and integrate ESG.
- Acquire professional skills such as teamwork, problem solving, flexibility, and project coordination.

## **Chapter 2: Co-op Study Activities**

### **2.1 My Job Description**

My role at Sustainability Solutions Nepal was that of a Sustainable Marketing Intern, working directly under the supervision of the ESG Director and Founder, Mr. Sandeep Shrestha. The primary focus of my position was to support the organization's research and consulting activities related to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices. This included conducting qualitative market research, engaging with stakeholders across multiple sectors, and contributing to sustainability awareness and communication initiatives.

Throughout the internship period, which spanned from January to May 2025, I was involved in a range of tasks that combined research, communication, and event coordination. My work contributed directly to SSN's goal of supporting organizations in Nepal in understanding and integrating ESG principles into their operations. The role required me to work independently on assigned tasks while also collaborating closely with the consulting team on broader organizational projects.

### **2.2 My Job Responsibilities**

The following responsibilities were assigned during my internship period as a Sustainable Marketing Intern at the organization.

- Conducting market research on ESG practices across different sectors in Nepal
- Identifying and shortlisting companies for qualitative interviews
- Reaching out to organizations through professional email and stakeholder outreach
- Preparation of structured interviews questionnaire
- Supporting the development of ESG survey and quizzes
- Participating in sustainability awareness events (WWF's Earth Hour)
- Assisting in the development of marketing and communications materials

The market research component was the most significant part of my role. This involved identifying organizations across six sectors — banking, hospitality, environmental NGOs, tourism, international sustainability platforms, and renewable energy — and assessing their suitability for in-depth qualitative interviews on ESG integration. I conducted secondary research on each organization before preparing tailored outreach communications, which helped improve response rates and the quality of subsequent interviews.

In addition to market research, I was responsible for drafting structured interview questionnaires adapted to three different levels of ESG awareness among respondent organizations. Organizations with advanced ESG systems received questions focused on implementation challenges and scaling strategies, while organizations at earlier stages of ESG awareness were asked more foundational questions about understanding and readiness. This tiered approach ensured that interviews remained productive and relevant regardless of the organization's level of ESG maturity.

My responsibilities also extended to supporting SSN's operational activities, including the design of ESG awareness surveys, participation in the WWF Nepal Earth Hour event, and contributions to internal marketing and communications materials. The role therefore offered exposure not only to research and analysis, but also to event-based sustainability engagement and organizational branding work.

### **2.3 Activities in Coordination with Co-workers**

The following activities reflect the collaborative tasks and coordination carried out with team members throughout the internship period.

- Discussing research approaches and company selection strategies
- Supporting event planning and execution for Earth Hour event (WWF)
- Sharing regular updates on outreach and interview progress
- Brainstorming ideas for improving SSN's value proposition

Collaboration with co-workers was central to the effective execution of most internship tasks. Regular team discussions helped refine the research methodology, particularly in the early stages when deciding which organizations to approach for interviews and how to structure the outreach process. The team environment at SSN was collaborative and open, where feedback was shared openly and intern contributions were taken seriously in project planning discussions.

One example of effective collaboration was the planning and execution of SSN's stall at the WWF Nepal Earth Hour event held in March 2025. Coordinating the event required close teamwork with colleagues to design the activity setup, prepare sustainability quiz materials, and manage participant engagement. The event drew approximately 300 to 400 participants, and the coordination experience gave me first-hand understanding of how sustainability organizations use public events to build awareness and organizational visibility.

## 2.4 Job Process Diagram



**Table 2:** Job Process Diagram

## 2.5 Contributions as a Co-op Student

The following points highlight the key contributions and support provided during my co-operative study at the organization.

- Expanded the list of companies for ESG research across six sectors
- Successfully initiated communication with organization, securing six stakeholders interviews
- Supported the design of ESG awareness surveys
- Assisted in planning interactive activities for WWF's Earth Hour (300-400 participants)
- Contributed ideas for improving SSN's service presentation
- Developed structured interview questionnaires for three levels of ESG understanding

Among the most impactful contributions of the internship was the successful execution of six primary stakeholder interviews across six different sectors. This required persistent follow-up communication with organizations, many of which had busy schedules and limited familiarity with formal ESG research processes. Securing these interviews and conducting them professionally was a significant achievement that directly contributed to SSN's market research objectives for the period.

In terms of organizational support, my contributions to improving SSN's service presentation materials gave the team new ideas for positioning its ESG advisory services toward potential clients. I also assisted in the eSewa employee ESG survey, which involved 242 respondents, contributing to data organization and preliminary analysis of the responses. These experiences allowed me to contribute meaningfully to SSN's consulting work beyond simply observing processes.



## Chapter 3: Learning Outcomes & Key Findings

### 3.1 Market Research on ESG Integration in Nepal – Six Interviews

As part of the internship, I conducted six primary stakeholder interviews across multiple sectors. Below are the detailed findings from each.

#### 3.1.1 ESG Leadership and Financial Sector Insights – NMB Bank

Interaction with NMB Bank highlighted one of the most advanced ESG integration models in Nepal's financial sector.

Key Findings:

- Early adoption of ESG policies since 2018, aligned with IFC guidelines.
- Dedicated Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) and ESG team.
- Membership in the Global Alliance for Banking on Values.

Critical Insight:

Despite strong internal systems, ESG implementation is constrained by client-side limitations: businesses are reluctant to adopt ESG due to cost implications, and lack of uniform enforcement across banks creates competitive imbalance.

Implication: Institutional readiness exists, but ecosystem-wide adoption is limited by weak regulatory enforcement and low private sector incentives.

#### 3.1.2 ESG vs. Compliance Perspective – Hotel Crowne Imperial

The hospitality sector presented a contrasting perspective where sustainability is viewed through a regulatory compliance lens rather than ESG integration.

Key Findings:

- Operations guided by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and tourism regulations.
- Environmental compliance ensured through IEE/EIA.
- Sustainability practices implemented only to meet regulatory requirements.

**Critical Insight:**

ESG is perceived as redundant or an additional burden beyond compliance. Operational concerns dominate decision-making, especially in city-based hotels.

Implication: There is a clear perception gap where ESG is not yet seen as value-adding, but rather as a potential operational constraint.

### 3.1.3 Transition from Awareness to Systems Change – Clean Up Nepal

The discussion with Clean Up Nepal reflected a shift from campaign-based environmental action to systems-oriented sustainability approaches.

**Key Findings:**

- Evolution from clean-up campaigns to long-term waste management systems.
- Focus on waste segregation, recycling, circular economy, and environmental education.
- Innovation: Safa Nepal app – enables citizens to report waste issues in real time and provides municipalities with data analytics.

**Critical Insight:**

Environmental challenges in Nepal are not due to lack of awareness alone, but due to weak policy enforcement, limited accountability mechanisms, and fragmented implementation systems.

Implication: Digital tools and data-driven governance can play a critical role in strengthening ESG implementation at the municipal level.

### 3.1.4 ESG as a Value Proposition in Tourism – Royal Mountain Group

Royal Mountain Group provided insight into ESG adoption in the tourism sector, particularly in community-based tourism models.

**Key Findings:**

- Sustainability driven by value-based decision-making, focusing on long-term stakeholder benefits.
- Implementation of international certification frameworks (e.g., European standards).
- Strong alignment with international tourist expectations (Europe and North America).

Challenges: Limited technical expertise, lack of dedicated sustainability personnel, and resistance from cost-focused partners.

#### Critical Insight:

ESG can serve as a competitive advantage, especially for targeting international markets.

However, scaling ESG requires ecosystem-wide capacity building.

Implication: In globally exposed sectors like tourism, ESG adoption is market-driven rather than regulation-driven.

#### 3.1.5 Role of Global Frameworks – UN Global Compact Nepal

The interaction with UN Global Compact Nepal highlighted the role of voluntary global frameworks in promoting ESG adoption.

#### Key Findings:

- Provides a platform for organizations to align with the 10 Principles (human rights, labor, environment, anti-corruption) and SDGs.
- Operates through voluntary participation and self-reporting (Communication on Progress).

#### Challenges:

- Limited technical capacity in Nepal, particularly in carbon accounting and Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions measurement.
- Dependence on international expertise, increasing costs for companies.

#### Critical Insight:

While interest in ESG is growing (especially for attracting international investment), technical capability remains a major bottleneck.

Implication: Capacity building and localization of ESG expertise are essential for long-term adoption.

#### 3.1.6 ESG Practices and Operational Realities – Simple Energy

The interaction with Simple Energy provided insights into ESG integration within Nepal's renewable energy sector, highlighting a model where sustainability is inherently embedded in core business operations rather than implemented through formal ESG frameworks.

#### Key Findings:

- Core business model centered on rooftop solar energy, minimizing land-use conflict and contributing directly to carbon emission reduction.

- Implementation of both CAPEX and OPEX (PPA) financing models.
- ESG considerations integrated through due diligence processes (environmental, financial, structural assessments).
- Presence of environmental and social safeguards within operational policies, including health and safety systems and compliance with international partner (PIDG) standards.
- Limited but notable social impact through short-term local employment and skill-based training.
- Operational challenge: Enforcement of safety compliance among local workers – trained personnel occasionally do not consistently adhere to required safety protocols (e.g., not wearing helmets, harnesses, or gloves during installation), reflecting gaps between formal training and on-ground behavioral compliance.

**Critical Insight:**

Despite strong environmental alignment, ESG integration remains largely informal and non-standardized:

- Absence of a dedicated ESG framework or reporting system.
- Social impact initiatives are short-term and operational.
- Governance influenced by international compliance but not translated into a clear internal ESG structure.
- Operational enforcement of safety-related ESG components remains inconsistent.

**Implication:** This case highlights a critical trend in Nepal's renewable energy sector: while businesses inherently contribute to environmental sustainability, the absence of formal ESG structuring, combined with regulatory uncertainty and market instability, limits the scalability and strategic value of ESG integration.

### **3.2 Development of Interview Questionnaire & Stakeholder Outreach**

Designed structured questionnaires based on three scenarios:

1. Organizations that understand ESG and have integrated systems
2. Organizations that Understand ESG but have not implemented it
3. Organization not familiar with ESG concepts

Separate interview structures for corporate organization and development agencies/INGO's

Outreach tasks included: Drafting professional emails, contacting organizations, scheduling meetings, and follow ups

### **3.3 WWF Earth Hour Engagement Activity**

Sustainability Solutions Nepal organized and managed an interactive stall at WWF Nepal's Earth Hour event, which hosted approximately 300-400 participants.

My responsibilities included:

- Designing interactive games (crosswords, treasure hunt, group activities)
- Developing game concepts, rules, and engagement strategies
- Creating clues and flow structure for the treasure hunt
- Managing stall operations, participants coordination, and prize distribution

Key Learning: Practical exposure to public engagement, event coordination, and communicating sustainability concepts interactively.

### **3.4 Development of Marketing & Communications Materials**

Assisted in improving SSN's communication materials:

- Redesigned the "ESG Beyond Profit" training flyer
- Created separate materials for corporate professionals and universities
- Refined SSN's value proposition presentation

### **3.5 ESG Survey and Sustainability Assessment for eSewa**

In the context of my internship at Sustainability Solutions Nepal, I was assigned to contribute to the ESG Survey & Sustainability Assessment performed for eSewa. This project entailed carrying out an assessment of employee perceptions on ESG performance within the company. In total, there were 242 employees surveyed representing different departments and age categories, as well as diverse hierarchical levels within the organization.

This project entailed assistance with analyzing survey data, organizing it, as well as reviewing the main aspects of ESG performance revealed during the process. The areas reviewed included governance policies, grievance and complaints handling processes, compliance systems, leadership, reduction of use of paper products, sustainable energy consumption and savings, waste

management, workplace health and safety, personal hygiene, emergency preparedness measures, and employee benefits programs. Thus, through this project, I acquired first-hand experience in conducting ESG assessments and sustainability reporting.

### **3.6 Problems Encountered & Solutions**

#### **3.6.1 Challenges Faced**

##### **I. Stakeholder Identification and Access:**

One of the major challenges during the internship was finding the appropriate personnel responsible for sustainability or ESG related activities within organization. In many Nepalese companies, ESG responsibilities are either across departments or not formally assigned to specific individuals. This made it difficult to know the correct point of contact for interview and discussions.

##### **II. Limited Awareness and Understanding of ESG**

Another challenge was the varying level of understanding regarding ESG concepts among organization. While some companies had sustainability systems and ESG framework, others were unfamiliar with the concept or viewed ESG only from a compliance perspective. This created difficulties in maintaining a standardized interview structure across all organizations.

##### **III, Scheduling and Communication Delays**

Coordinating interviews with professionals from different sectors was time consuming due to busy schedules, and delayed email responses. Multiple follow ups were often necessary before securing interview appointments.

##### **IV. Lack of Publicly Available ESG Information**

Many organizations in Nepal do not publish sustainability reports or ESG disclosures publicly. As a result, preliminary background research before interviews was limited, making it necessary to rely heavily on primary discussion and stakeholder explanations.

##### **V. Practical Challenges During Event Coordination:**

During WWF Nepal's Earth Hour event, managing participant engagement, coordinating activities, and ensuring smooth execution of games required quick decision making and teamwork under time pressure.

#### **3.6.2 Solutions to the Issues:**

##### **I. Flexible Interview Structures:**

To accommodate varying levels of ESG understanding among organization, separation interview questionnaires were developed for:

- Organizations with established ESG systems
- Organizations aware of ESG but without implementation
- Organizations unfamiliar with EGS concepts

This flexible approach allowed discussion to remain relevant and productive across different sectors and organizational maturity levels.

## II. Cross Sector Comparative Analysis

To overcome the lack of publicly available ESG information, insights gathered from multiple sectors were comparatively analyzed. This helped identify recurring patterns such as implementation gaps, limited technical capacity, and regulatory challenges related to ESG integration in Nepal.

## III. Collaboration with Supervisors and Team Members

Regular discussions with supervisors and colleagues helped improve the quality of research activities, stakeholder's engagement approaches, and interview preparation. Team collaboration also contributed to effective event coordination during WWF Nepal's Earth Hour Program.

## IV. Interactive Public Engagement Methods

Interactive games and engagement activities were designed during Earth Hour to simplify sustainability concepts and encourage public participation. This approach improved audience interaction and created a more engaging awareness experience.

### **3.7 Literature Review**

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks have become increasingly important in evaluating how organizations manage sustainability, ethical responsibility, and long-term business performance. ESG integration refers to the incorporation of environmental, social, and governance considerations into organizational decision-making, operations, and stakeholder management processes.

According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), Environmental and Social Management Systems (ESMS) help organizations identify, assess, and manage environmental and social risks associated with business operations. Organizations with structured ESG systems are

generally better positioned to manage sustainability risks, improve operational resilience, and meet international stakeholder expectations.

Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (1984) explains that organizations should create value not only for shareholders but also for stakeholders including employees, customers, communities, regulators, and the environment. This theory is highly relevant to ESG integration, as sustainability practices require organizations to balance financial objectives with social and environmental responsibilities.

The Triple Bottom Line concept introduced by Elkington (1997) further emphasizes that organizational success should not be measured solely through financial performance, but also through environmental and social impact. Businesses are increasingly expected to focus on "People, Planet, and Profit" simultaneously to ensure sustainable long-term growth.

Research on ESG implementation in developing economies highlights that organizations often face challenges related to technical expertise, regulatory uncertainty, limited reporting systems, and low organizational awareness. In Nepal, ESG practices are still in a developing stage, with many organizations focusing primarily on regulatory compliance rather than comprehensive sustainability integration.

The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) also promotes responsible business practices through its Ten Principles related to human rights, labor standards, environmental responsibility, and anti-corruption. Organizations participating in such global frameworks are encouraged to improve transparency, accountability, and sustainability reporting practices.

The findings from the internship interviews reflected many of these theoretical perspectives. While some organizations demonstrated structured ESG systems and international alignment, others showed limited awareness, implementation gaps, and challenges related to resources, technical capacity, and long-term sustainability planning.

Overall, the literature suggests that ESG integration is not only a compliance requirement but also a strategic approach that can improve organizational resilience, stakeholder trust, and sustainable business performance.

### **3.8 Recommendation to the Company**

Based on the experience gained during the internship, the following recommendations are suggested for Sustainability Solutions Nepal to further strengthen its ESG advisory and research

initiatives:

#### I. Increase ESG Awareness Programs

SSN can conduct more awareness sessions, workshops, and educational campaigns targeted toward organizations that are still unfamiliar with ESG concepts and sustainability reporting practices.

#### II. Develop Sector Specific ESG Framework

Different industries in Nepal face different sustainability challenges. Developing sector specific ESG guidance framework could help organizations better understand practical implementation strategies relevant to their operations.

#### III. Strengthen ESG Capacity Building Services

Organizations frequently face technical challenges related to ESG measurement, reporting, and implementation. Expanding training and capacity building services could help bridge these knowledge gaps.

#### IV. Enhance Research and Data Collection Systems

Developing more structured ESG assessment tools, surveys, and data collection systems could improve the quality and consistency of organizational ESG evaluations.

### **3.9 Learning during the Co-op Studies**

The internship at Sustainability Solutions Nepal provided significant practical exposure to ESG consulting, sustainability research, stakeholder engagement, and organizational analysis. Through this experience, I developed a deeper understanding of how businesses and institutions in Nepal approach sustainability and ESG integration.

The internship also enhanced my understanding of the challenges organization face while implementing sustainability practices, including technical limitations, regulatory uncertainty, resource constraints, and operational barriers.

In addition, participating in research interviews and sustainability engagement activities improved my confidence in conducting professional communication, managing responsibilities independently, and interacting with professionals from multiple sectors.

Overall, the internship experience helped bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice while strengthening my interest in sustainability consulting and responsible business practices.

### **3.10 Applying knowledge from Coursework**

During the internship, I was able to apply several concepts and theories learned throughout my Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) studies in practical workplace situations.

Knowledge gained from marketing courses was useful while preparing outreach email, communication materials, and stakeholder engagement strategies. Research methodology and analytical skills learned during coursework supported the process of conducting interviews, analyzing findings, and identifying ESG related trends across organizations.

Concepts from organizational behaviour and management courses also helped in understanding workplace collaboration, professional communication, and organizational structures. Furthermore, business ethics and strategic management concepts contributed to my understanding of sustainability, governance, and long term organizational decision making.

This practical application of academic knowledge helped strengthen both my theoretical understanding and professional capabilities.

### **3.11 Special Skills & New knowledge Gained from The Co-op Studies**

The internship experience contributed significantly to my personal and professional development by helping me build several important skills.

**Problem Solving Skills:** Conducting stakeholder outreach, coordinating interviews, and managing sustainability engagement activities required adaptability and practical problem solving in dynamic situations.

**Communication and Stakeholder Engagement:** The internship improved my professional communication skills through regular interaction with organizations, preparation of outreach materials, and coordination of interviews and meetings.

**Teamwork and Collaboration:** Working closely with supervisors and colleagues during projects and events improved my teamwork, coordination and collaborative working abilities.

**Time Management and Professional Responsibility:** Managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously enhanced my organizational skills, ability to meet deadlines, and professional accountability.

**ESG & Sustainability Knowledge:** Most importantly, the internship provided practical exposure to ESG concepts, sustainability frameworks, stakeholder engagement processes, and sustainability consulting practices within the Nepalese business environment.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

### 4.1 Summary of highlights from My Co-Op Experience

I joined Sustainability Solutions Nepal with the Objective of Gaining practical exposure to sustainability consulting, ESG research, and stakeholder engagement practices within Nepalese organizations. The internship provided me with the opportunity to work in a professional environment where I could apply academic knowledge while developing practical industry related skills.

During the internship, I was involved in market research, stakeholder outreach, ESG related interviews, sustainability awareness initiatives, and communication support activities. One of the major highlights of the internship was conducting and coordinating interviews with organizations from different sectors including banking, hospitality, tourism, renewable energy, environmental organizations, and international sustainability platforms. These interactions provided valuable insights into how organizations in nepal perceive and implement Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices.

Additionally, I contributed to the development of structured interview questionnaires, ESG surveys, stakeholder communication materials, and internal discussions related to improving SSN's service presentation and outreach strategies.

Overall, the internship experience provided meaningful exposure to sustainability consulting practices while allowing me to better understand the opportunities and challenges associated with ESG integration in Nepalese organizations

A particularly meaningful aspect of the internship was the cross-sectoral nature of the stakeholder interactions. Engaging with organizations as diverse as NMB Bank, Hotel Crowne Imperial, Clean Up Nepal, Royal Mountain Group, UN Global Compact Nepal, and Simple Energy provided a rich comparative understanding of how ESG is perceived and practiced at very different stages of organizational maturity. While some organizations such as NMB Bank demonstrated structured ESG frameworks aligned with international standards, others were still operating primarily at the level of regulatory compliance or environmental awareness without systematic ESG integration. This variance itself was a key finding that added significant value to SSN's market understanding.

Beyond the core research activities, participation in the WWF Earth Hour event and the eSewa survey analysis added further dimensions to the internship experience. These activities

highlighted how sustainability consulting organizations like SSN operate not only through formal advisory engagements, but also through public awareness initiatives and data-driven ESG assessments. Together, these activities broadened my understanding of the full scope of work involved in sustainability consulting in Nepal's emerging ESG landscape.

#### **4.2 Self Assessment of Professional Development**

This internship significantly contributed to my personal and professional growth. Throughout the internship period, I developed stronger communication, research, analytical, and organizational skills through practical workplace experience and professional interactions. Conducting stakeholder outreach and interview helped improve my confidence in professional communication and relationship management. I also became more comfortable handling responsibilities independently, coordinating with professionals, and managing tasks within deadlines.

The internship enhanced my ability to analyze organizational practices critically, particularly from sustainability and ESG perspective. Exposure to different industries and organizational approaches helped broaden my understanding of corporate sustainability challenges and strategies decision making processes.

In addition, working within a consulting oriented environment improved my adaptability, teamwork, and problem solving abilities. I learned the importance of professionalism, accountability, and continuous learning in a dynamic work environment. Overall, the experience strengthened both my technical understanding of ESG concepts and my readiness for future professional opportunities.

At the start of the internship, I had theoretical knowledge of ESG frameworks and sustainability principles from my academic coursework, but limited exposure to how these concepts are applied in practice. Over the course of five months, I was able to bridge that gap significantly. Conducting qualitative research interviews across multiple industries required me to quickly develop a working knowledge of sector-specific sustainability challenges, which in turn improved my ability to ask meaningful follow-up questions and analyze responses more critically.

One of the most important personal growth areas was developing confidence in professional communication. Drafting formal outreach emails to senior representatives at banks, hotels, and international organizations, and then following up to secure interview appointments,

required a level of professional persistence and communication clarity that I had not previously practiced. This experience substantially improved my ability to write purposefully in a professional context and to manage stakeholder relationships with greater confidence.

From an academic perspective, the internship helped me appreciate the gap that often exists between sustainability theory and real-world implementation. While frameworks like Freeman's Stakeholder Theory and Elkington's Triple Bottom Line provide strong conceptual foundations, applying them to organizations with resource constraints, limited technical capacity, or low regulatory pressure is far more complex in practice. This realization has deepened my interest in sustainability consulting and responsible business as a career path, where translating theory into actionable organizational change is the core challenge.

#### **4.3 Limitations of the Co-Op Studies**

Although the cooperative education program provided valuable learning opportunities, several limitations were encountered during the internship period.

One limitation was the relatively short duration of the internship, which restricted the opportunity to observe long term ESG implementation processes and organizational changes. Since ESG integration is a long term strategic process, certain sustainability initiatives and outcomes could not be fully assessed within the internship timeframe.

Another limitation was the limited availability of publicly accessible ESG data and sustainability reports among the Nepalese organizations. This increased dependence on stakeholder interviews and discussions as primary sources of information.

In some cases, organizational confidentiality and time constraints also limited access to detailed operational and strategic information related to sustainability practices.

Additionally, differences in ESG understanding across organizations created challenges in maintaining standardized discussions and comparisons between sectors.

Despite these limitations, the internship provided significant practical exposure and valuable insights into sustainability consulting and ESG integration practices in Nepal.

The sample size of six interviews, while sufficient for an exploratory qualitative study, also limits the generalizability of findings. A broader research effort involving more organizations across additional sectors — such as manufacturing, agriculture, or microfinance — would have provided a more comprehensive view of ESG integration patterns across Nepal's economy. Future

research building on this internship’s findings could benefit from a larger and more systematically selected sample.

Additionally, as a marketing student relatively new to ESG consulting, there were moments during interviews when more advanced technical knowledge — particularly around carbon accounting, scope emissions measurement, or financial due diligence processes — would have allowed for deeper and more technically precise discussions. While supervisory guidance helped address some of these gaps, building stronger ESG technical knowledge remains an area for continued personal development going forward.



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## Appendices

Table 3: Daily Work Update Log

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Tasks Completed</b>
26/01	Monday	Orientation and introduction to Sustainability Solutions Nepal and ongoing projects
27/01	Tuesday	Assisted in sustainability research and ESG-related documentation
28/01	Wednesday	Conducted market research on sustainable business practices
29/01	Thursday	Assisted in content development for sustainability communication
30/01	Sunday	Research on ESG frameworks and reporting standards
02/02	Monday	Assisted in proposal drafting and sustainability research
03/02	Tuesday	Conducted research on responsible business practices and ESG integration
04/02	Wednesday	Supported branding and sustainability communication activities
05/02	Thursday	Assisted in organizing sustainability-related data and research materials
06/02	Sunday	Participated in internal discussions on sustainability projects
09/02	Monday	Conducted research on climate and ESG trends
10/02	Tuesday	Assisted in policy review and sustainability documentation
11/02	Wednesday	Supported market analysis related to sustainable business consulting
12/02	Thursday	Assisted in stakeholder research and sustainability communication
13/02	Sunday	Research on ESG standards and sustainability reporting
16/02	Monday	Assisted in preparing sustainability-related presentation materials

17/02	Tuesday	Conducted secondary research on ESG implementation practices
18/02	Wednesday	Assisted in documentation and report preparation
19/02	Thursday	Supported sustainability awareness and communication tasks
20/02	Sunday	Participated in internal meetings and project coordination
23/02	Monday	Conducted research on sustainable finance and ESG investment trends
24/02	Tuesday	Assisted in proposal writing and documentation support
25/02	Wednesday	Research on stakeholder engagement and sustainability strategies
26/02	Thursday	Assisted in sustainability policy drafting activities
27/02	Sunday	Organized project-related data and sustainability resources
02/03	Monday	Assisted in sustainability market research and ESG-related documentation
03/03	Tuesday	Conducted research on sustainable business practices and competitor analysis
04/03	Wednesday	Election Holiday
05/03	Thursday	Election Holiday
06/03	Sunday	Assisted in branding and sustainability communication activities
08/03	Monday	Work from Home (Office Repair) – ESG research work
09/03	Tuesday	Work from Home – Data organization
10/03	Wednesday	Work from Home – Survey analysis
11/03	Thursday	Work from Home – Research documentation
12/03	Sunday	Assisted in policy drafting and sustainability content preparation
15/03	Monday	Conducted ESG framework research and sustainability benchmarking
16/03	Tuesday	Assisted in preparing presentation materials and proposal documentation

17/03	Wednesday	Supported stakeholder mapping and sustainability communication tasks
18/03	Thursday	Research on ESG standards and sustainable finance trends
19/03	Sunday	Assisted in drafting sustainability policy documents
22/03	Monday	Conducted research on climate and ESG-related case studies
23/03	Tuesday	Assisted in sustainable marketing and branding activities
24/03	Wednesday	Data compilation and sustainability report review
25/03	Thursday	Participated in internal discussions on ESG strategy and business sustainability
26/03	Sunday	Assisted in research documentation and content refinement
29/03	Monday	Holiday (Post WWF Earth Hour Event)
30/03	Tuesday	Assisted in sustainability awareness content development
31/03	Monday	Conducted market research on sustainability consulting services
01/04	Tuesday	Supported ESG-related research and presentation preparation
02/04	Wednesday	Assisted in proposal writing and documentation work
05/04	Thursday	Conducted sustainability trend analysis and secondary research
06/04	Sunday	Assisted in communication and outreach-related activities
07/04	Monday	Research on ESG integration and responsible business practices
08/04	Tuesday	Assisted in sustainability-related content development
09/04	Wednesday	Data organization and documentation support
12/04	Thursday	Assisted in ESG research and reporting tasks
13/04	Sunday	Sustainability communication and market analysis work
14/04	Monday	New Year Holiday
15/04	Tuesday	Assisted in sustainability proposal development
16/04	Wednesday	Participated in internal coordination and project support activities
19/04	Thursday	Conducted ESG and sustainability benchmarking research

20/04	Sunday	Assisted in policy refinement and documentation
21/04	Monday	Supported sustainability communication and branding tasks
22/04	Tuesday	Research on climate resilience and sustainable development
23/04	Wednesday	Assisted in report drafting and proposal support
26/04	Thursday	Conducted market analysis related to ESG consulting services
27/04	Sunday	Assisted in stakeholder engagement and sustainability communication
28/04	Monday	Research on responsible business and ESG trends
29/04	Tuesday	Assisted in sustainability presentation and documentation tasks
30/04	Wednesday	Participated in internal meetings and project coordination
03/05	Thursday	Assisted in sustainability policy review and refinement
04/05	Sunday	Conducted ESG-related research and documentation
05/05	Monday	Supported proposal writing and sustainability communication
06/05	Tuesday	Assisted in organizing project data and sustainability resources
07/05	Wednesday	Research on sustainable business development practices
10/05	Thursday	Assisted in ESG strategy and sustainability reporting work
11/05	Sunday	Conducted secondary research on climate and ESG initiatives
12/05	Monday	Assisted in content writing and sustainability awareness activities
13/05	Tuesday	Participated in internal project discussions and coordination
14/05	Wednesday	Assisted in proposal development and documentation support
17/05	Thursday	Work from home
18/05	Sunday	Assisted in ESG communication and stakeholder research
19/05	Monday	Supported sustainability project documentation
20/05	Tuesday	Research on ESG frameworks and responsible investment practices
21/05	Wednesday	Assisted in final report preparation and content review
24/05	Thursday	Conducted final documentation and project organization tasks

25/05	Sunday	Assisted in internship report compilation and revisions
26/05	Monday	Final submission preparation and internship completion activities

Figure 3: Draft Mail

**Draft for INGO's**

**Subject:** Interview Request – Environmental, Societal, and Governance (ESG) Integration Research in Nepal

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope this message finds you well.

My name is Aarogya Shamsher Maskey, a final-year (8th semester) BBA student at Kathmandu College of Management (KCM), currently completing my internship at Sustainability Solutions Nepal (SSN).

I am conducting a market research study titled:

**“Assessing ESG and Sustainability Transition Needs Across Development Partners and Private Sectors in Nepal.”**

The study explores how development agencies integrate ESG into funding processes, governance systems, and private sector engagement, and identifies key transition challenges and opportunities. SSN is an ESG advisory and capacity-building firm supporting financial institutions, development partners, and corporations in integrating ESG into strategy and operations. It has worked with organizations such as UNDP Nepal, NMB Bank, Nabil Bank, Dolma Impact Fund, and Transparency International UK on ESG system design, due diligence, and capacity strengthening. I would appreciate a 30–45-minute semi-structured interview to understand your organization's perspective. The discussion is purely research-based and exploratory.

A brief research summary is attached for reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Aarogya Shamsher Maskey

BBA (8th Semester), Kathmandu College of Management

**Draft for Corporations**

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope you are doing well.

My name is Aarogya Shamsher Maskey, a final-year BBA student at Kathmandu College of Management, currently interning at Sustainability Solutions Nepal (SSN).

I am conducting a research study titled:

“Assessing ESG and Sustainability Transition Needs across Development Partners and Private Sectors in Nepal.”

The research examines how corporations integrate ESG and sustainability across strategy, operations, governance, and value chains, and identifies transition needs beyond CSR practices.

SSN is an ESG advisory and capacity-building firm supporting financial institutions, development partners, and corporations in integrating ESG into strategy and operations. It has worked with organizations such as UNDP Nepal, NMB Bank, Nabil Bank, Dolma Impact Fund, and Transparency International UK on ESG system design, due diligence, and capacity strengthening.

I would sincerely appreciate the opportunity for a 30–45 minute semi-structured discussion to learn from your organization's experience.

A brief summary of the research is attached for context.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

Aarogya Shamsher Maskey

Intern, Sustainability Solutions Nepal

Fig 4: Concept Notes

### **Market Research: Assessing ESG and Sustainability Transition Needs Across Development Partners and Private Sectors**

**Background:** Globally, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations are increasingly shaping investment decisions, regulatory frameworks, and corporate strategy. Investors, development partners, and regulators now expect organization to demonstrate ethical governance, responsible supply chains, climate awareness, labor compliance, and transparent reporting practices. While many organizations in Nepali engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainable initiatives, the integration of ESG into core business strategy, operations, financing structures and value chains remains at an emerging stage. Nepal is now facing a growing pressure to move beyond standalone CSR activities toward structured, system wide ESG integration

**Purpose of the Study:** This research aims to assess how organizations in Nepal, including financial institutions, corporations, and development agencies currently understand and apply ESG principles within their business systems and operational framework.

The study seeks to explore:

- Current sustainability and ESG practices across sectors
- Sector specific challenges and transition barriers
- Institutional capacity gaps and advisory needs
- Opportunities for structured ESG integration across value chains
- Potential areas for collaboration and innovation

#### **Research Objectives:**

- To examine how organizations integrate sustainability and ESG principles across strategy, operations, governance structures, and value chains.
  - To assess organizational ESG maturity, readiness, and transition requirements.
  - To identify systemic gaps, emerging trends and strategic opportunities within Nepal is evolving sustainability landscape.
- To generate actionable insights that inform strengthened ESG integration, innovation, and long-term sustainability solutions.

**Methodology:**

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research approach combining both primary and secondary data sources.

**Primary Data:**

- Semi-structured interviews with selected organizations across key sectors • Interviews designed to explore organizational understanding, operational integration, governance mechanisms, and ESG transition challenges
- Open ended questioning to capture institutional perspective beyond compliance based reporting

**Secondary Data:**

- Review of publicly available CSR reports, sustainability disclosures, annual reports, and ESG related communications
- Analysis of policy documents, regulatory frameworks, and donor funding standards • Sectoral review of sustainability trends within Nepal's financial, corporate and development sectors

**Expected Outcome:**

The research aims to generate practical insights into:

- How ESG is currently positioned within Nepal's business and development landscape
- The extent to which sustainability is embedded across organizational systems rather than confined to CSR
- Emerging regulatory, investor, and donor pressures influencing ESG adoption
- Key transition barriers and advisory opportunities
- Strategic entry points for capacity building and system level ESG integration about:

This research is being conducted by **Aarogya Shamsheer Maskey**, a final year (8<sup>th</sup> semester) Marketing BBA student at Kathmandu College of Management (KCM), Gwarko. This

study is undertaken as a part of his academic marketing requirements. He is currently completing his internship at Sustainability focused research and advisory exposure.

Sustainability Solutions Nepal (SSN) is a sustainability advisory and capacity-building organization that works to strengthen ESG integration across business systems. SSN focuses on embedding sustainability within strategy, operations, governance frameworks, production process, financing mechanisms, and ethical standards to ensure long term resilience and responsible growth.

**Contact:**

Aarogya Shamsheer Maskey

**Photo Gallery**



Fig 5: WWF Earth Hour



Fig 6: Colleague's Birthday Celebration



Fig 7: Interview done by Alumni for KCM Social Media